THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS

AT

THE MONK'S REST

AND

THE BUGLE HOTEL

TITCHFIELD

The Bugle Hotel

DAVID CLARKE

THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS

AT THE MONK'S REST AND THE BUGLE HOTEL

TITCHFIELD

DAVID CLARKE

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN A.D. 70?

Taken from: *What Happend in AD 70*, **by Ed Stevens**

Prepared and narrated by David Clarke for the group meeting at The Monke's Rest and the Bugle Hotel in Titchfield.

All quotes are taken from the King James Bible (KJV)

1 WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN A.D. 70?

Many of us need to refresh our understanding of first-century history. There were events of great importance during that time—events which are rarely taught, and whose full significance is often not properly grasped.

In A.D. 66, the Jewish nation rose in revolt against the Roman Empire. This uprising was the result of growing tensions. Some causes lay with Roman oppression and misrule, while others arose from unrest and division among the Jews themselves.

The Siege and Fall of Jerusalem

By the summer of A.D. 70, the Romans, under the command of Titus, had laid siege to Jerusalem and finally taken the city. What followed was devastating.

The Siege of Jerusalem 66 - 70 A.D.

Jerusalem was burned, and the temple was utterly destroyed—desecrated and laid waste. This brought the Jewish revolt to a decisive end.

These events were not unforeseen. Around forty years earlier, the Lord Jesus Christ had foretold this very destruction. Every detail came to pass exactly as He had said.

The consequences were immense. The Jewish nation, together with its temple worship and sacrificial system, was so completely dismantled that it has never since been restored in any lasting form.

For this reason, many Jewish teachers have referred to A.D. 70 as "**the end of Biblical Judaism**."

The Impact on the Early Church

These events also marked a decisive turning point for the early Christians.

Before A.D. 70, Christians were generally regarded as merely another sect within Judaism, alongside groups such as the Pharisees and Sadducees. As a result, they often suffered persecution at the hands of other Jews who sought to suppress what they saw as a dangerous movement.

However, when the revolt against Rome began, the Jewish Christians acted differently. Remembering the warnings of Christ, they refused to become involved. Instead, they fled the region—many crossing the Jordan River to the city of Pella.

By doing so, they clearly distinguished themselves from the rest of the Jewish nation. While other Jewish groups joined in rebellion, the Christians did not. From that point onward, they were no longer viewed as a sect of Judaism, but as a separate people.

A Spiritual Kingdom, Not an Earthly One

This distinction highlighted a vital truth: the kingdom of Christ is not a political or earthly empire, but a spiritual one.

The destruction of Jerusalem made it impossible to continue the old covenant system. With no temple standing, the ceremonial law—especially the sacrifices—could no longer be observed. As a result, the long-standing disputes over circumcision and law-keeping quickly lost their force.

The Jewish nation itself was so broken by this judgment that it would never again pose a serious threat to the spread of Christianity in the

Roman world.

A Testimony to That Generation

The fall of Jerusalem served as a powerful testimony to that generation concerning the identity of Jesus Christ.

As it is written:

> *"The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."*

— Gospel of Matthew 21:43.

This event demonstrated that God's purpose was not to establish a national kingdom centred in Jerusalem, but a spiritual kingdom under the reign of Christ over all nations.

The Lord Himself had declared before His crucifixion that those who rejected Him would yet see a vindication of His claims:

> *"Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."*

— Gospel of Matthew 26:64.

That vindication came in the events surrounding A.D. 70.

The Significance of These Events

The destruction of Jerusalem was not a minor historical incident—it was a moment of profound theological importance.

It marked:

The end of the old covenant system centred on the temple
The clear separation between Judaism and Christianity

A public judgment upon those who rejected Christ
The establishment of Christ's people as the true spiritual Israel

The scale and severity of the destruction also served as a warning to the wider Roman world. It demonstrated that God's judgment was real, and that the claims of Christ were not to be ignored.

The Kingdom had now been fully established under the sovereign rule of Christ, and His enemies—those who had rejected Him and persecuted His followers—had been brought to judgment. In this way, the things spoken beforehand were fulfilled, even as it is written:

> *"For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled… When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."*

— Gospel of Luke 21:22,31.

Thus, the prophecies concerning the Kingdom and the coming of Christ were brought to their appointed fulfilment.

2. Were Jesus and the New Testament Writers Wrong?

The Inspiration of the New Testament Under Attack

The question is often raised—particularly by critics of the Christian faith—whether Jesus and the writers of the New Testament were mistaken in their expectations.

The preterist understanding directly addresses one of the most persistent arguments used by liberals and sceptics against the inspiration of Scripture.

For example, Albert Schweitzer, a well-known liberal theologian, argued at length that Christ expected to return within the lifetime of His contemporaries. In his work *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*,

he concluded that although Jesus was sincere, He was ultimately mistaken. Yet Schweitzer still suggested that Christ should be followed, despite this supposed error.

Likewise, Bertrand Russell, in his book *Why I Am Not a Christian*, used the same line of reasoning to reject Christianity altogether. He argued that since Christ's predictions—particularly concerning His return—were not fulfilled, His authority must be called into question.

This objection is not isolated. Many critics assert that the repeated New Testament statements regarding the nearness of Christ's coming were not fulfilled, and therefore conclude that the apostles themselves were mistaken. From this, they argue that the New Testament cannot be divinely inspired.

The passages they appeal to are numerous and appear across the writings of all the New Testament authors. Their claim is straightforward: if these time-sensitive predictions failed, then both Christ and His apostles were in error.

To appreciate the force of this objection, one must examine the very texts they cite. Read them carefully, and consider them within their first-century historical setting. Only then can their meaning—and the validity of the criticism—be properly assessed.

The Rebuttal: Were They Mistaken?

The charge that Christ and the New Testament writers were mistaken rests upon a single assumption—that the events they spoke of did not take place when they said they would. But this assumption must itself be examined.

The New Testament repeatedly affirms the nearness of the Lord's coming. These statements are neither vague nor symbolic in their timing. They are direct and emphatic:

- *"The coming of the Lord draweth nigh"* (James 5:8)
- *"The end of all things is at hand"* (1 Peter 4:7)

- *"Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry"* (Hebrews 10:37)

If these words are taken in their plain sense, they clearly refer to events expected within the lifetime of those who first heard them.

There are therefore only two possible conclusions. Either:

Christ and His apostles were mistaken, or The events they foretold did, in fact, take place within that generation.To say that they were mistaken is to undermine the very foundation of the Christian faith. It would call into question not only their prophetic authority, but the truthfulness of Scripture itself.

But the alternative is both consistent and compelling: the prophecies were fulfilled—precisely as spoken—in the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

This understanding resolves the apparent difficulty. The "coming" of Christ, in this context, is not to be understood as a bodily return to the earth at the end of world history, but as a coming in judgment—just as God is said to have "come" in judgment upon nations in the Old Testament (see Isaiah 19:1).

Thus, when Jerusalem fell, it was not merely a political or military catastrophe. It was a divine act of judgment upon those who had rejected the Messiah and persecuted His people. In that event, Christ was vindicated, His warnings were confirmed, and His kingdom was openly established.

Far from disproving the inspiration of the New Testament, these events confirm it. The precise fulfilment of Christ's predictions within the stated time frame demonstrates that His words were true, and that the apostles spoke with divine authority.

The real difficulty, therefore, does not lie with the text itself, but with later interpretations which have removed these prophecies from their

original historical setting and projected them into a distant future.

When the Scriptures are read as they were first given—within their first-century context—the supposed error disappears, and the integrity of Christ and His Word stands firm.

This matter is not a small point of interpretation, but one of truth and integrity. If the words of Christ are to be trusted, then they must be understood as they were spoken and fulfilled as they were promised. It therefore falls to Christian men, in every generation, to handle the Scriptures honestly—refusing both the sceptic's unbelief and the softening hand of compromise—and to stand firmly upon the truth as it is revealed in the Word of God.

A. The Second Coming Was Near in the First Century

(1) Matthew 10:23 — the mission would not be finished before His return.
(2) Matthew 16:27–28 — some then living would see it.
(3) Matthew 24:33–34 — it would occur before that generation passed.
(4) Matthew 26:64 — the Jewish rulers themselves would witness it.
(5) Romans 13:11–12 — the hour had already come; the day was at hand.
(6) Romans 16:20 — Satan would soon be crushed.
(7) 1 Corinthians 7:26–31 — the time was shortened; the world passing away.
(8) 1 Corinthians 10:11 — the ends of the ages had come.
(9) 2 Thessalonians 2:7 — the mystery of lawlessness was already at work.
(10) Hebrews 1:2 — it was already the last days.
(11) Hebrews 9:26 — the consummation of the ages had arrived.
(12) Hebrews 10:25 — the day was drawing near.
(13) Hebrews 10:37 — He was coming in "a very little while."
(14) James 5:7–9 — the coming of the Lord was at hand (cf. Phil. 4:5).
(15) 1 Peter 1:20 — it was already the last times.

(16) 1 Peter 4:7 — the end of all things was at hand.
(17) 1 Peter 4:17 — the time for judgment had come (cf. Rev. 3:10).
(18) 1 John 2:8,17,18 — it was the last hour.
(19) Jude 18–19 — mockers of the last time had appeared.
(20) Revelation 1:1–3; 22:6,10 — the events would shortly take place; the time was near.
(21) Revelation 22:7,12,20 — Christ Himself declared that He was coming soon (cf. Rev. 2:16; 3:11).

B. Parables Concerning the End of the Age and the Coming

(1) Matthew 13:24–43 — the Parable of the Tares.
(2) Matthew 13:47–50 — the Parable of the Dragnet.
(3) Matthew 21:33ff (cf. Mark 12:1ff; Luke 20:9ff) — the Vineyard.
(4) Matthew 22:1ff (cf. Luke 14:16ff) — the Wedding Feast.
(5) Luke 19:11–17 — the Nobleman.
(6) Matthew 25 — the Ten Virgins and the Talents.
(7) Luke 13:6–9 — the Barren Fig Tree.

C. Other Statements Concerning the Destruction and the Coming

(1) Matthew 3:7–12 (cf. Luke 3:7–17; 12:49).
(2) Matthew 10:17–34 (cf. Luke 10:3–21; 12:11–56).
(3) Matthew 23:29–24:44 (cf. Mark 13; Luke 17:20–37; 21).
(4) Luke 11:42–52; 12:49; 13:33–35; 19:41–44; 23:27–31.

The Testimony of the New Testament Writers

The New Testament speaks with one united voice concerning the nearness of Christ's coming. These were not uncertain expectations, but clear and repeated declarations.

The Lord Jesus Himself said:

> *"There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kindom." — Gospel of Matthew 16:27–28.*

The apostles continued in the same certainty.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans:

> *"Now it is high time to awake out of sleep… the night is far spent, the day is at hand." — Epistle to the Romans 13:11–12.*

> To the Corinthians, he declared that they were living at a decisive moment in redemptive history:

> *"Upon whom the ends of the world are come." — First Epistle to the Corinthians 10:11.*

And in Hebrews, he taught that Christ's earthly ministry took place at the consummation of the ages:

> *"Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared…" — Epistle to the Hebrews 9:26.*

> James, writing shortly before his martyrdom around A.D. 62, spoke with urgency:

"The coming of the Lord draweth nigh… behold, the judge standeth before the door." — Epistle of James 5:8–9.

Peter likewise affirmed:

> *"The end of all things is at hand… the time is come that judgment must begin." — First Epistle of Peter 4:7,17.*

John, writing later still, declared:

> *"The world passeth away… it is the last time." — First Epistle of John 2:17–18.*

In the book of Revelation, he confirms that the events described were imminent:

"Things which must shortly come to pass… for the time is at hand." — Book of Revelation 1:1,3.

And again:

> *"Seal not the sayings… for the time is at hand." — Book of Revelation 22:10.*
>
> The Lord Jesus Himself, speaking in Revelation, repeatedly affirms:
>
> *"Behold, I come quickly." — Book of Revelation 22:7,12,20 .*

A Consistent and Certain Expectation

These statements leave no room for uncertainty. The writers do not speak in terms of possibility, but of certainty. They do not say "perhaps" or "in the distant future," but declare plainly that the coming and the end were near.

Indeed, they taught that these things would occur within their own generation—so near, in fact, that some then living would witness them.

As that first generation of Christians drew toward its close, the sense of urgency did not diminish—it intensified. The later writings of the New Testament do not delay the expectation, but bring it closer still.

What was once said to be "at hand" is later described as:

> *"Nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11)*
>
> *"At the very door" (James 5:9)*

The testimony is consistent from beginning to end: the coming of Christ and the end of the age were not distant events, but imminent

realities for that first-century church.The following chart will illustrate how this sense of nearness became increasingly pronounced as A.D. 70 approached.

3. Immanency Intensified Near the End

Earlier Predictions	Later New Testament Statements
Keep on preaching to Israel until Christ comes – Matt. 10:23; 24:14; 28:19–20	Get out of Israel; His coming is near – Rev. 18:4; 22:6,7,10,12,20
All the apostles were still alive then, but only "some" would remain – Matt. 16:27–28; Jn. 21:22	Historical fact: Most apostles were dead by A.D. 66 (James A.D. 44; others A.D. 62–66)
He was not "at the door" then, but would be when these things occurred – Matt. 24:33	These things were now happening; He was "at the door" – Jas. 5:9
Tribulation would come in that generation; watch for the signs – Matt. 24:21–31	Tribulation was now present – Acts 11:19; 14:22; Rom. 5:3; 2 Cor. 1:8ff; 1 Thess. 1:6; 3:3; 2 Thess. 1:4–10; Rev. 1:9; 7:14
All will be fulfilled when Israel is "shattered" – Luke 21:22; Dan. 12:7	Peter affirms fulfilment is near – 1 Pet. 4:7
Seal up the book; the time is not near – Dan. 12:4,9	Do not seal the book; the time is at hand – Rev. 22:10
Heaven and earth will not pass until fulfilment – Matt. 5:17–18; 24:29,35; Isa. 65–66	Heaven and earth ready to pass – Heb. 12:28; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21

General time references – Jn. 6:44; 12:48 (Last Day) Matt. 24:3,6,14 (End of Age) Matt. 24:34 (“this generation”) Dan. 2:21; Acts 1:7	Specific nearness statements – Day approaching – Heb. 10:25 A very little while – Heb. 10:37 Last hour – 1 Jn. 2:18 Time at hand / shortly – Rev. 1:1–3; 22:10 End near – 1 Pet. 4:7,17 Coming at hand – Jas. 5:8–9
Apostasy will come – false teachers and prophets – Matt. 24:10–14	Apostasy had begun – 1 Jn. 2:18; 2 Thess. 2:7; Jude 18–19; 2 Pet. 3:3
Redemption not yet near – Luke 21:31; 19:11–27	Redemption now near – Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30
Kingdom near when signs appear; inherited at His coming – Luke 21:31; Matt. 25:34	Kingdom very near; inheritance about to be received – Heb. 12:28; James. 2:5; 2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 11:15; 22:10
Satan to be crushed in that generation – Gen. 3:15; Matt. 23:33; Jn. 8:41–44	Satan to be crushed soon – Rom. 16:20; 1 Pet. 5:1–10; Rev. 22:6–7
Mystery and redemption to be consummated – Dan. 9:24; ch. 12; Eph. 1:9–14	Mystery and redemption now being consummated – Rev. 10:7; 12:10; ch. 21–22
How long until the end? When the holy people are shattered – Dan. 12:6–9	How long until vindication? “A little while” – Rev. 6:10–11; Luke 18:8
Wedding feast when bridegroom comes – Matt. 22:2–13; 25:1–13	Marriage supper has come – Rev. 19:7–9
Harvest at the end of the age – Matt. 13:30	The hour to reap has come – Rev. 14:15

4. Imminency Confirmed, Not Denied

As we see on the chart above, their sense of nearness increased dramatically as that first generation of the church drew to a close.

When Albert Schweitzer and others pointed out this imminency dilemma, some theologians tried to avoid it by saying that the earlier NT writings only suggested the possibility of an imminent return, but not the certainty of it. Then as time passed and the delay got longer and longer, the later NT writers began to postulate a delay.

But that theory runs counter to the facts. As time progressed and the final NT books were written, their sense of imminency did not diminish at all, but instead was intensified to fever pitch. Questions like "How long, O Lord?" (Rev 6:10), and answers like "in a very little while" (Rev 6:11; Heb 10:37; 1Pet 5:10), indicate a very intense sense of expectancy. In fact, Peter told his first century readers in AD 63, just one year before the Neronic persecution, to "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Pet 1:13). Was he setting them up for a big "let down" and disillusionment when the End failed to happen "in a very little while"? Absolutely not! Jesus came soon, just as he had promised.

The events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem provide the perfect historical setting for the return of Christ. That is the very point of the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24 and parallels). The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was within that first century generation, and His coming ("parousia" Mt. 24:3) was directly connected to that judgment upon Israel. Christ came in AD 70!

To be continuedGod Willing.